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TAGS: PGOV PREL PINS TU

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION PARTIES UPDATE: TALK OF ELECTORAL
ALLIANCES CONTINUE

REF: ANKARA 003227

Classified By: Acting PolCouns Charles O. Blaha, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).).

¶1. (C) Octogenarian leftist Rahsan Ecevit --- a former MP, founder of the Democratic Left Party (DSP), and the wife of former PM Bulent Ecevit (currently in a stroke-induced coma) --- is continuing her husband's efforts to unite the secular opposition parties against the governing, pro-Islam Justice and Development Party (AKP). Rahsan Ecevit met on June 26 with former president (and fellow octogenarian) Suleyman Demirel --- who is leading his own efforts to unite various political parties and leaders on the center right --- and is scheduled to meet on June 27 with center-left Republican People's Party (CHP) Chairman Deniz Baykal. Former Motherland Party (ANAP) PM Mesut Yilmaz was also recently cleared of corruption allegations and Hurriyet political journalist Sukru Kucuksahin recently told us that Yilmaz will try to return to the political arena.

¶2. (C) The Ecevits, Demirel, Baykal, and Yilmaz have been sparring with each other for decades and have shown an unfailing inability to cooperate. The consensus among political science professors quoted in an article in Cumhuriyet newspaper is that a grand alliance of center-right and center-left secular parties against AKP is impossible. Pro-AKP government Yeni Safak newspaper reported Rahsan Ecevit's meeting with Demirel under the sarcastic headline "Good News: Rahsan is on the job." One AKP MP speculated such efforts could actually help AKP by further dividing its already-feckless opposition.

¶3. (C) Comment. We expect talk of electoral alliances and party mergers to continue, but at this point this appears little more than talk. The larger opposition parties --- CHP, True Path Party (DYP), and Nationalist Action Party (MHP) --- would love to absorb their smaller rivals as part of a one-sided merger, but have little inclination to cooperate with each other or the smaller parties by forming an electoral alliance (reftel). The smaller opposition parties that are clearly below the 10 percent electoral threshold may flirt with mergers and alliances, but their maneuvers at this point appear unlikely to have a significant impact. End Comment.

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